

EAST COUNTY CITIZENS ADVISORY BOARD MINUTES

Meeting of March 4, 2009

Eastern Montgomery Regional Services Center
3300 Briggs Chaney Road
Silver Spring, Maryland 20904

Members Present: Kim Bobola, Ph.D. (Chair); Bill Strassberger (Parliamentarian); David Kochanski, Esq.; G. Stanley Doore; Allan Mulligan; Vanessa Ali; Sheala Durant; Anthony Ramirez; Benoy Thomas; Marva R. Deskins, Esq.; Amjad Chaudhry; Thomas Aylward; John Thomas; John Fausti, Esq.; and Dwayne Parris

Members Absent: Eric Luedtke; Alfreda Hunt Payne, Ph.D.; and Colleen Ionata (Vice Chair)

Staff: Anise Key Brown (Director, Eastern Montgomery Regional Services Center); Chuck Crisostomo (Asst. Director, Eastern Montgomery Regional Services Center) and Gwen Haney (Program Specialist, EMRSC)

Guests: Mara M. Parker (Staff, Councilmember Marc Elrich's office); Claire Iseli (Staff, Councilmember Don Praisner's office); JoAnn Hutchison; Clyde Martin; Carol Martin; Lewis Sosnowik; Marguerite Autry; Kay Turner; Dolores Colie; Gloria Miller; Gladys Kaplan; M. Rodriguez; Alexandra Manolatos; Joan Selinger; Claire Carabello; Marilyn Goldstein; Frank Vasquez; Paul & Marilyn Voigt; Yetlie Morales-Macedo, Frederick Seelman; Mary Lou Griffin; Frank Carouso (GLCA); Jamie White; Bruce Fries; Lou Falasco; Susan Zhou; Viola Mils.

Citizen's Forum: Chair Bobola welcomed everyone. A request for the Board's assistance to obtain a zoning waiver was made by **Bobby Fries**, owner of the Hollywood Ballroom on Industrial Drive in Silver Spring. Ms. Fries provided the following information:

She has been operating her dance business with the zoning designation of "Health Club" since opening approximately 17 years ago. Recently, she was told that this is an inappropriate designation and that she is out of compliance with zoning for that district. She has also been denied the ability to acquire an enterprise license in the district, which allows her to rent out her facility for receptions, cultural events, and the like, because of the zoning issue.

Ms. Fries attributes this conflict to her support of youth "go-go" dances at her facility which began in November of 2008. She believes the police are inaccurately connecting area crimes by youth to attendees at these dances.

Anise Key Brown explained that the county is currently proposing a revision of zoning laws which would allow for the Hollywood Ballroom to be closed down without the opportunity for exceptions. A public hearing for review of this proposal will be held in the near future.

Comments were taken from among the many supporters of the Hollywood Ballroom that attended this Board meeting.

The Board referred this matter to the Economic Development and Infrastructure Committee for further review and recommendations.

Call to Order: The chair called the meeting to order at 8:07 p.m.

Chair Bobola then introduced the evening's speaker, Ray Feldman, Community Outreach Liaison for the Intercounty Connector (ICC). This was a presentation to provide an update on progress.

Ray Feldmann provided a description of the ICC as an 18 mile, \$2.5 billion program on the books for the last 50 years. Its purpose is to improve the flow of traffic from Routes 270/370 to Rt. 1 by taking traffic off of local roads. The ICC will be a toll road with "congestion pricing", meaning it will be regulated by traffic flow – when the flow is light, pricing will drop and when the flow is heavy, pricing will rise. By controlling congestion and keeping traffic moving it will also minimize air pollution. Tolls will be under the administration of the MD Transportation Authority, who will operate and maintain the ICC. Tolls will be paid via an EZ Pass or a photo of the license plate followed by a mailed notice of amount due.

Mr. Feldmann then updated the construction progress of the "five sections" (A - E), each of which he explained is a separate joint venture, allowing small and medium size businesses the opportunity to profit. Section A, from Shady Grove to Georgia Ave., is about 35% complete and is expected to open before the end of 2010. Section B is about to start, and sections D & E are not yet contracted. Section C, which started last April and affects the East County region, is approximately 25% complete. It starts west of Old Columbia Pike, goes over Rt. 29, across Briggs Chaney Road, and under Old Gun Powder Road. Old Columbia Pike will include a bridge extending over the ICC, rather than visa-versa, to accommodate residents' requests.

Mr. Feldman noted various locations where there would be sound walls. Among those along Briggs Chaney Road were the residential areas on Gateshead Manor, Aston Manor, Dogwood Drive, and Tanglewood. He concluded with noting that the ICC Community outreach philosophy is to "let people know before it happens."

The floor was opened for questions:

Stan Doore expressed concern that 14 homes which were destroyed could have been avoided by constructing a straighter, shorter route.

Tom Aylward asked who was policing the adequacy of the sound walls. Mr. Feldmann stated that the State Transportation Transit Authority is manager of the ICC and is responsible to comply with standards of the State Regulatory Administration, which are quite explicit.

Bill Strassberger asked about sidewalks at Paint Branch High School and along Old Columbia Pike. Mr. Feldmann said there will be a pedestrian path and a bike path along Old Columbia Pike.

Stan Doore asked what kind of path it would be (the construction). Mr. Feldmann did not know. Stan Doore suggested to Mr. Feldmann that the county consider hike-biker paths and trails be constructed using elevated modular technology to help shorten routes, protect the environment and be more user friendly. Stan suggested Mr. Feldmann talk with Bob Simpson of MC-DOT. Mr. Feldmann made a note of this.

Approval of Minutes:

Chair Bobola asked for a review of the minutes of the ECCAB Meeting of February 4, 2009.

Stan Doore requested the addition of two announcements he had made at the end of that meeting.

[March 4, 2009 - 1] A motion to approve the minutes of February 4, with the addition of Stan Doore's announcements, was offered. The motion was seconded and unanimously approved.

Director's Report: Anise Key Brown, Director

- Montgomery County's first project using the Economic Stimulus funds will be in East County – road improvements along Rt. 650.
- The Town Hall meeting in White Oak on February 11 exhibited strong anti-immigration sentiments. Other issues discussed included affordable housing, roadside solicitation, and opportunities for youth.
- On March 16th county budget announcements will be made and there will be cuts. The Board is expected to get on the list to address the budget. She will inform the Board of the cuts at the April meeting.
- Forms for Risk Management have been distributed to Board members and need to be returned.
- On behalf of Kim Bobola, Marva Deskins, and Chuck Crisostomo, the Leadership Summit Report was distributed.

Chair's Report: Kim Bobola

- Tomorrow is the deadline to file as a candidate for the vacant councilmember position. The primary is on April 21 and the election is on May 19.
- Anjoo Chohda has been updating the Board's web page.
- The Northeast Consortium's Cost and Performance Report is now available.
- The Colesville Strawberry Festival may not be held this year due to difficulties filling leadership roles. It was an important source of funding for the C-4 Closet, so a meeting will be held on March 19, 7:30 pm, at the Mosque to discuss holding a different form of this event.
- She will be stepping down as Chair next year and anyone interested should begin thinking about it. The election will be held in June 2009. Colleen Ionata will also not be returning next year.

Council's Report: Claire Iseli

- Reports from committees are not clear on how much of the bike paths are in the ICC plans so it may be a complicated issue.
- The county purchased more land than needed for the new police department in White Oak; they are considering building multi-family apartments, which is against the Master Plan and zoning for this area.

Mara Parker (for Councilmember Elrich)

- In follow up to the matter of bike paths, if they are diverted onto existing street surfaces there may be environmental concerns. Also, the state is only paying for parts of bike paths along the ICC, and the county is responsible for the remainder. This will be discussed on Tuesday.
- The initial projected deficit of \$450 million is now \$520 million.

Committee Reports

Services Committee: Anthony Ramirez, Chair

- **Anthony Ramirez** attended the White Oak Town Hall Meeting and reports on the topic of immigration. All immigrants arrested for a violent crime will be reported to the INS (USCIS).
- The Northeast Consortium has been funded for the upcoming year only. The committee will continue to monitor the program's status.
- **Colleen Ionata** is trying to get the Department of Park and Planning to install more trash cans in local parks in the county.

Economic Development and Infrastructure Committee: Tom Aylward, Chair

- **Tom Aylward** contacted Chris Jones (Burtonsville Shopping Center owner) and learned construction is being held up because Chris wants a full functioning traffic signal, and DPWT and the State Highway Administration want it to be "right in and right out." According to State Highway Standards, it is too close to the light at Seibel's. The County Executive favors the full signal. A letter could be written to modify these standards. Claire Iseli stated the State Highway Administration questions the timing of the other lights and the traffic flow. She urged the Board to keep pushing on this issue.
- **John Thomas** suggested the need to write a letter to bring transit to the area along Rt. 29 and in relation to the WSSC and Percontee areas.

Outreach Committee: Marva Deskins, Chair

- **Marva Deskins** explained the Youth Forum will be revised to a scaled down project. The committee plans to invite youth from area schools to attend the May Board meeting and to participate in a question and answer period, resulting in information collection that will be used to write a report. A reception will precede the meeting.

Old Business : None

New Business:

[March 4, 2009 - 2] A motion to write a letter supporting a traffic signal along MD 198 at the future Burtonsville access road. The motion was seconded and unanimously approved. No discussion was requested.

Chair Bobola stated she has received requests to consider continued participation in the Adopt-a-Road project. She asked Board members to look at whether the program supports the Board's purpose as "advisory." The issue was discussed briefly.

[March 4, 2009 - 3] A motion to continue participation in the Adopt-a-Road program was made and seconded. (4 in favor, 7 opposed). The motion failed. The East County Citizens Advisory Board will not participate in the Adopt-A-Road program.

Announcements:

Marva Deskins stated that at the Board's last meeting, one of the guests said there is a problem with pedestrian traffic at Fairland Road and Route 29. Chair Bobola advised that the Board will hear about pedestrian safety at the April 1 Board meeting. **Bill Strassberger** reiterated that the Fairland/Rt. 29 intersection is very dangerous and the Board should consider looking into this. **Chair Bobola** referred the matter to the Services Committee.

Stan Doore addressed a flyer he had given to members regarding the youth laptop computers.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:32 p.m.

The next meeting of ECCAB is scheduled for April 1, 2009.